

teacher for a child is a loving parent, and the decision whether to require uniforms should be made by parents, by teachers, by local schools. But if they want to do it, we want to help them understand how it can be done. That's why today I signed a directive instructing the Secretary of Education to distribute a new manual on school uniforms to every school district in the Nation. Rather than telling schools what to do, we are providing a roadmap for setting up the school uniform policy for schools who choose to start one.

Every one of us has an obligation to work together, to give our children freedom from fear and the freedom to learn. If we act together, we can give them the chance to make the most of their young lives and to build better futures.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:15 p.m. on February 23 at the Sheraton Miramar Hotel for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 24.

**Remarks Prior to a Roundtable
Discussion on School Uniforms in
Long Beach, California**
February 24, 1996

Thank you very much, Mr. Cohn. I am here mostly to listen to all of you. And I thank you for taking a little time to meet with me.

I have spent an enormous amount of my time in the last 18 years now since I became a Governor of my State in 1986-'78—in public schools. And I devoted a lot of time as President to how we can improve education through higher standards and higher expectations, get higher performance. It is obvious that unless the school is a safe, disciplined, drug-free learning environment it's impossible for learning to occur.

And what we have tried to do at the national level is to encourage all kinds of grass-roots reforms and to make it possible for people to do what they think is appropriate in their schools; not to tell schools how they should go about improving learning and improving the environment, but to support them when they wanted to do it. And because there were some legal questions raised I did send the Attorney General out here.

As you know, I mentioned your school district in the State of the Union Address, and today, just before I came here, I signed an Executive order instructing the Secretary of Education to send to all the school districts in the country this manual that we have just done up on school uniforms—that we're going to send to all the school districts in the country, not to tell them they should do what you have done, but to encourage them if they want to do it and to show them how to do it.

I also wanted to say something else. As I said, I mostly want to listen to you, but I think it's important to point out that if there is a school uniform or a dress code in a school, you not only have the chance of reducing the violence, I also think it sends a different message to the students. When young people are young we should try to teach them to judge themselves and others based on what's inside them, not what's outside them. And in that sense, I think the school uniform policy is as valuable for students from well-to-do families as it is for students from poor families because of the message it sends.

And I'm very—I'm pleased to be here, and I wanted to come here mostly to honor you for your efforts, and hopefully, to publicize your efforts throughout the country. I'm also anxious to hear from the students. I have to tell you I got a lot of hot letters from students—[laughter]—after I bragged on your policy. The mail and the e-mail were burning up—[laughter]—for the next several days.

So why don't we start and just hear from everyone who is here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:02 a.m. in the library at the Jackie Robinson Academy. In his remarks, he referred to Carl Cohn, superintendent, Long Beach School District.

**Memorandum on the School
Uniforms Manual**

February 24, 1996

Memorandum for the Secretary of Education

Subject: Manual on School Uniforms

Quality education is critical to America's future and the future of our children and